

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6835

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EXDIS

FOR ASST SECRETARY ROGERS FROM JOVA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, MX

SUBJECT: ALLEGATIONS AGAINST CIA IN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

INCIDENT

REF: STATE 65081

1. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CORROBORATE BURELLI'S ACCOUNT TO YOU OF ALLEGED NEW INCIDENT INVOLVING PRESIDENTS ECHEVERRIA AND PEREZ. PRESIDENT PEREZ DID MEET WITH UNIVERSITY GROUPS ON TWO OCCASIONS, BUT NOT AT UNIVERSITY AND NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US SUGGESTS THAT EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS WERE RAISED. THERE WAS ALSO ONE OCCASION FOLLOWING PETROLEUM WORKERS LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF ECHEVERRIA AND PEREZ WHEN CROWDS SURGED FORWARD, SECURITY DETAIL WAS SEPARATED FROM PRESIDENTS AND SOME OF CROWD YELLED AT PRESIDENTS (SEE MEXICO 2503) THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY IN ANGER. AGAIN THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT ECHEVERRIA MADE COMMENTS BURELLI CITED. I SHOULD MENTION ALSO THAT PEREZ WAS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH VARIOUS YOUTH GROUPS INCLUDING STUDENTS, BUT FAILED TO SHOW UP. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THESE GROUPS, AFTER WAITING A LONG TIME, WERE DISGRUNTLED AND SOMEWHAT OBSTREPEROUS BUT, IN FACT, HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS, EMBARRASSING OR OTHERWISE, WHETHER DUE TO PEREZ' GOOD JUDGMENT IN NOT APPEARING OR WHETHER HIS OVERLADEN SCHEDULE SIMPLY DID NOT PERMIT. ON CONFIDENTIAL

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BALANCE, I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT PRESS WOULD NOT

HAVE PICKED UP SUCH COMMENTS HAD THEY BEEN MADE ALTHOUGH
THE POSSIBLE VALIDITY OF THE STORY CANNOT BE RULED OUT.

2. FOLLOWING PRESS REPORTS (SEE MEXICO 2512) ON MARCH 21
THAT RABASA HAD SAID THE GOM WOULD RESPOND TO A U.S.
"PROTEST" AFTER HE HAD CONSULTED WITH PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA,
RABASA OVER THE WEEKEND "CLARIFIED" HIS REMARKS WHICH HE
SAID HAD BEEN DISTORTED. SINCE THERE HAD BEEN NO PROTEST,
HE SAID, THERE WAS NO NEED FOR AND THERE WOULD BE NO
RESPONSE BY THE GOM. THE EXCELSIOR STORY REPORTING THIS
SHARED RABASA'S COMMENTS WITH MINE. I TOLD A REPORTER (AT
PEREZ' DEPARTURE CEREMONIES) THAT DE OLLOQUI HAD BEEN
CALLED IN FOR AN EXCHANGE OF OPINION, THAT THERE WAS NO
"PROTEST" BUT RATHER A CLARIFICATION BETWEEN TWO VERY GOOD
FRIENDS. I WAS ASKED AGAIN ABOUT THE CIA AND I REPEATED
THE SENSE OF MY PREVIOUS STATEMENT, I.E. THAT I DON'T COM-
ENT ON THE CIA BUT THAT IN THIS CASE, THAT IS THE LAMENT-
ABLE INCIDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY, I WISHED TO SAY THAT
THERE HAD BEEN ABSOLUTELY NO INVOLVEMENT BY THE CIA (NOR
ANY OTHER USG AGENCY).

3. I RAN INTO SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT MOYA BRIEFLY
DURING PEREZ' DEPARTURE CEREMONIES. MOYA REFERRED TO
GUTIERREZ BARRIOS' CALL ON ME (SEE MEXICO 2507) AND SAID
HE BELIEVED INCIDENT WOULD NOT PROMPTLY DIE DOWN. IN THE
MEANTIME OTHER CABINET-LEVEL OFFICIALS HAD COMMENTS TO
MAKE. PRESIDENCY SECRETARY CERVANTES DEL RIO, INTERVIEWED
BY PRESS AT PEREZ' DEPARTURE CEREMONIES, SAID THAT THE GOM
POSITION ON POSSIBLE CIA ACTIVITIES IN MEXICO " IS VERY
CLEAR; IT IS A POSITION OF NOT PERMITTING FOREIGN INTER-
VENTION IN OUR INTERNAL AFFAIRS." ASKED ABOUT THE POSSI-
BILITY OF AN INVESTIGATION OF CIA ACTIVITIES IN MEXICO,
CERVANTES SAID, "THIS IS WITHIN THE COMPETENCE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL AND WOULD REQUIRE A DENUNCIATION" (I.E. A
FORMAL COMPLAINT BY SOMEONE). THE REPORTER THEN
POINTED OUT THAT THE UNIVERSITY HAS COMPLAINED BECAUSE OF
DAMAGES CAUSED IN THE MARCH 14 INCIDENT. CERVANTES SAID,
"THEN I THINK THAT AN INVESTIGATION HAS BEEN OPENED."
(PRESS ACCOUNTS DO NOT INDICATE THAT CERVANTES HAD ANY
DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH INVESTIGATION BUT WAS MERELY
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DESCRIBING THE LOGIC OF THE SITUATION.) SECRETARY OF
PUBLIC EDUCATION BRAVO AHUJA, ALSO APPARENTLY ACCOSTED BY
PRESS AT PEREZ' DEPARTURE, DECLARED THAT THE CIA "HAS PRO-
JECTED BY ITS ATTITUDES IN LATIN AMERICA A DISAGREEABLE
IMAGE BECAUSE OF ITS FREQUENT INTERVENTIONS." ATTORNEY
GENERAL OJEDA PAULLADA SIMPLY DECLINED TO COMMENT, AT
LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN
INVESTIGATION.

4. IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THE GOM WOULD LIKE FOR THE WHOLE INCIDENT NOW TO BE FORGOTTEN. THIS CERTAINLY SEEMS TRUE IN THE CASE OF MOYA, RABASA AND PROBABLY MOST OF ECHEVERRIA'S PRINCIPAL ADVISORS. IT IS NOT TRUE, OF COURSE, OF OUR ENEMIES IN THE PRESS AND THOSE WHO LIKE TO FISH IN TROUBLED WATERS. I AM UNABLE TO STATE WITH ANY CONFIDENCE THAT ECHEVERRIA WILL NOT RETURN TO THESE CHARGES AT SOME POINT. HIS SENDING GUTIERREZ TO SEE ME WAS MEANT AS REASSURANCE, AN "EXPLANATION," HOWEVER SELF-SERVING, OF HIS ACTION AND A CONCILIATORY GESTURE. IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT HE WOULD HAVE MADE SUCH A GESTURE HAD WE NOT CALLED DE OLLOQUI IN. FROM GUTIERREZ' COMMENTS TO ME AND MOYA'S COMMENTS TO DICK SAMPSON, IT APPEARS THAT ECHEVERRIA VIEWS THE EPISODE AS A NET PLUS FOR HIMSELF. HE FEELS THAT HE HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS MACHISMO, HE HAS ISOLATED A DISSIDENT GROUP AMONG STUDENTS, AND HE HAS BOLSTERED OR MAINTAINED HIS STRONG POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE MEXICAN LEFT AND HIS "INDEPENDENT" (OF U.S.) IMAGE HERE AND ABROAD. IT SEEMS CLEARLY THE COURSE OF WISDOM AT THIS POINT TO ALLOW THE INCIDENT TO BE FORGOTTEN IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. SHOULD ECHEVERRIA RETURN TO THE ATTACK AND MAKE SIMILAR CHARGES IN PUBLIC IN THE FUTURE, IT SEEMS TO ME WE MUST CONSIDER VERY CAREFULLY WHAT APPROACH WE MIGHT MAKE WHICH WOULD HAVE SOME CHANCE OF SUCCESS IN DISCOURAGING ECHEVERRIA'S PRACTICE OF USING US UNFAIRLY AS A WHIPPING BOY.

5. WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT (A) THIS IS TRADITIONAL PRACTICE IN MEXICO AND (B) IN A "SKUNK CONTEST" WE HAVE PRESS AND MEDIA HERE (AND IN LARGE PART IN U.S.) STACKED AGAINST US. HENCE, PERFECTION IS UNATTAINABLE, BUT WHAT WE CAN HOPE FOR IS THAT SALT NOT BE UNFAIRLY RUBBED IN

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